
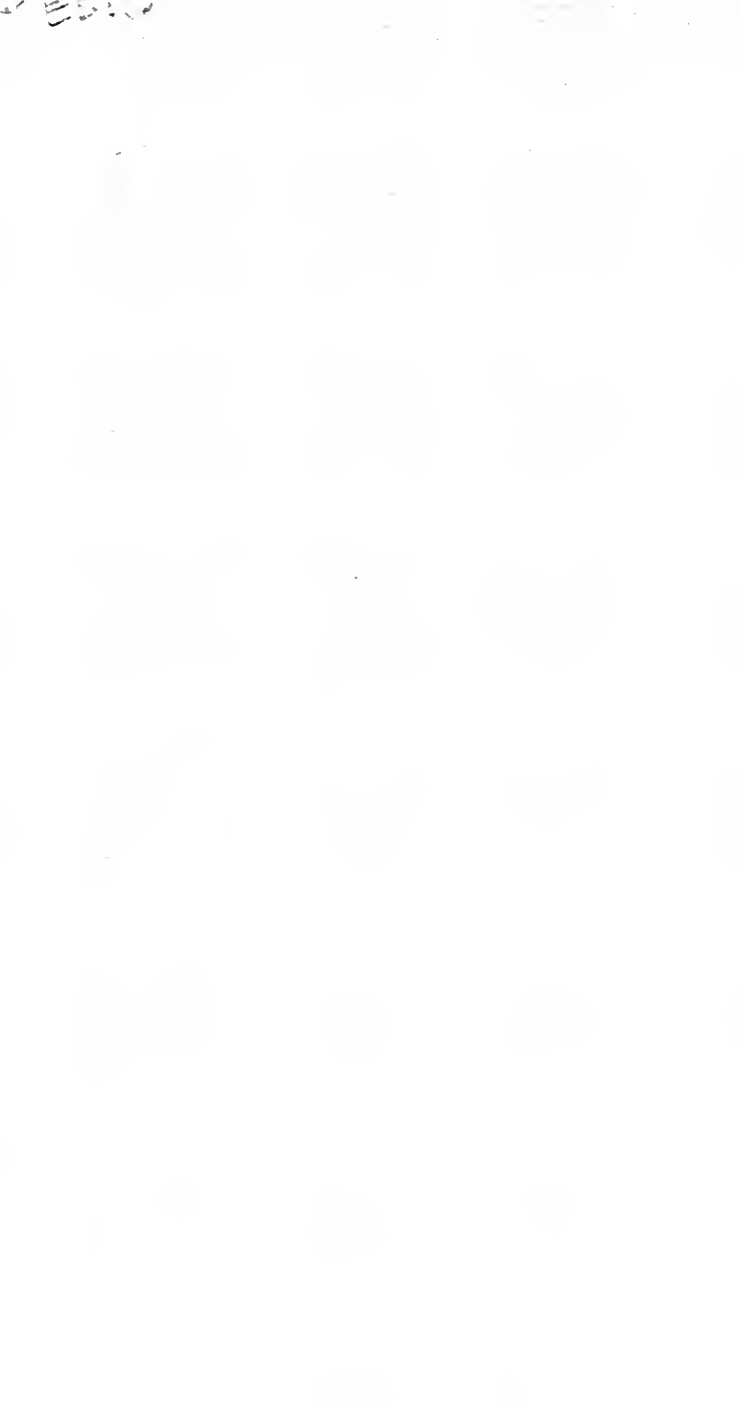


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P H I L I P M A S S I N G E R.

THE LIFE OF PHILIP MASSINGER,
BY
JOHN G. BURTON.

L O N D O N :

1789

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L I F E

O F

PHILIP MASSINGER.

THOUGH *Massinger's* Claim to an eminent Rank amongst the English Dramatick Writers has never been contested, and the Criticks have placed him immediately after *Shakespeare, B. Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher*; notwithstanding we have certain Evidence that his Plays were much applauded in their Representation, and warmly commended by contemporary Writers, yet such has been the unaccountable Fate of this excellent Author, that the Name of *Massinger*, till within these twenty Years, has been sunk in Obscurity, and almost buried in Oblivion. None of our Stage Poets, from the Restoration to the Beginning of his present Majesty's Reign, have taken the least Notice of him or his Writings*.

B

The

* In the Year 1751 Proposals were printed for a new Edition of *Massinger's* Works with Notes and Observations in

The Silence of *Dryden* is not to be accounted for on any Principle of Reason or Justice. But indeed the Man who could treat *Shirley* with such Contempt as to rank him with the Dunces of his *Macfleckno*, might wish to stifle the Memory of a Writer, who was as much superior to him in Dramatick Excellence, as *Dryden* himself was above all other Writers of his Time, in the Vigour, Harmony and Variety of his Numbers.

Mr. *Rorwe* has paid *Massinger* a very great Compliment indeed, but it must be granted that it is at the Expence of his own Candour and Honesty. In his Tragedy of the *Fair Penitent*, he condescended to steal the Plot, Characters, and sometimes the Sentiments of the *Fatal Dowry*. But this Conduct was as weak as it was unfair; for a small Acknowledgement of his Obligations to the original Author would not only have saved him from the Disgrace of a shameful Detection, but have made that a legal Prize which is now an Act of Piracy.

We* are told indeed, that *Rorwe* lived in the Days of literary filching; when Plagiarism was a fashionable Trick amongst Authors. Such an

in five Volumes 12mo, at the moderate Price of *Two Shillings and Sixpence* per Volume, but the Subscription went on so slowly that the Project was dropt.

* It was the Fashion with the Wits of the last Age to conceal the Places from whence they took their Hints or their Subjects.

Goldsmith's Life of Parnell.

Excuse

Excuse I think ought no more to be admitted in the Courts of *Parnassus*, than a Robber's justifying his Thefts by the great Number of his Associates and Companions, would be allowed to be a good Plea in *Westminster Hall* or at the *Old Bailey*.

The little that can be known of *Massinger*, I have principally gleaned from the scanty Materials which *Antony Wood*, in his *Athenæ Oxonienses*, and Mr. *Langbaine* in his *Lives of the Dramatick Poets*, have afforded me. That curious and laborious Searcher into History, Biography and Antiquities, Mr. *John Oldys*, in his MS. Notes on *Langbaine's Poets*, has pointed out some Mistakes of both these Authors respecting *Massinger*, and has sometimes suggested Matter of Intelligence not unworthy of Notice.—To Mr. *Reed of Staples Inn* I am indebted for the frank Communication of these MS. Notes, a complete List of the various Editions of *Massinger's Plays*, and several useful Hints relating to him and his Works.

Philip Massinger, the Son of* *Philip Massinger*, a Servant belonging to the Family of *Pembroke*, was born at *Salisbury* in the Year 1584. He was entered a Commoner at St.

* I cannot guess from what Information *Oldys* in his MS. Notes gives the *Christian Name* of *Arthur* to *Massinger's Father*; nor why he should reproach *Wood* for calling him *Philip*; since *Massinger* himself, in the Dedication of the *Bondman* to the Earl of *Montgomery*, says expressly that his Father *Philip Massinger* lived and died in the Service of the Honourable House of *Pembroke*.

Alban's Hall, Oxford, in the seventeenth Year of his Age, in 1601; where, though encourage d in his Studies by the Earl of *Pembroke*, yet, says *Wood*, he applied his Mind more to Poetry and Romances for about four Years or more than to Logick and Philosophy, which he ought to have done, as he was patronized to that End.

By styling *Massinger's* Father a Servant, *Wood* did not, I suppose, intend to convey any Mark of Degradation, or any other Meaning than that he was a Gentleman of the Earl of *Pembroke's* Retinue. It is certain that, in the Year 1597, he was employed by that Nobleman as a Messenger on no trifling Business to Queen *Elizabeth*, whose Character would admit of nothing unimportant or insignificant in her Service. Amongst the *Sydney Papers*, published by *Collins*, there is a Letter of *Rowland White*, Esq; to Sir *Robert Sydney*, in which he acquaints him that Mr. *Massinger* was newly come from the Earl of *Pembroke* with Letters to the Queen for his Lordship's Leave of Absence on St. *George's* Day. This carries a considerable Proof that the Bearer of Letters to *Elizabeth*, on a Matter perhaps which she thought important, was no mean Person; for no Monarch ever exacted from the Nobility in general, and the Officers of State in particular, a more rigid and scrupulous Compliance to stated Order than this Princess.

A different Relation of *Massinger's* College Education is given by *Langbaine*: He informs us, that *Massinger's* Father was a Gentleman be-
longing

longing to the Earl of *Montgomery**, in whose Service, after having lived many Years, he

* *Langhaine* has committed a Mistake respecting the Title of *Montgomery*, which did not belong to the Family of *Pembroke* till the Decease of *William* Earl of *Pembroke*, who died 1630. *Clarendon*, in his Character of *Philip* Earl of *Montgomery*, who was afterwards Patron to *Massinger*, informs us that he was very young when *James* I. came to the Crown; that he was taken with Lord *Herbert*'s Comeliness of Person, and his Skill in Riding and Hunting; and that after bestowing many Honours upon him, he created him in 1605, Earl of *Montgomery*. But *Clarendon* perhaps did not know the real Cause of Lord *Herbert*'s Advancement. The Behaviour of the *Scots* to the *English* on *James*'s Accession to the Throne of *England* was generally obnoxious and much resented. At a Meeting of *English* and *Scotch* Gentlemen, at a Horse Race near *Croyden*, a sudden Quarrel arose between them, occasioned by one Mr. *Ramsay*'s striking *Philip* Lord *Herbert* in the Face with a Switch. The *English* would have so far resented this Affront, as to have made instantly a national Quarrel of the Matter; and one Gentleman, Mr. *Pinchbeck*, rode about the Field with a Dagger in his Hand, crying out, 'Let us break our Fast with them here, and dine with them in London.' But *Herbert* not resenting this contumacious Behaviour of *Ramsay*, the King was so charmed with his peaceable Disposition, that he made him a Knight, a Baron, a Viscount and an Earl, all in one Day. *Osborne*, from whom I transcribe this, and who lived during these Transactions, intimates, that *Herbert*'s Cowardice prevented not only that Day from being fatal to the *Scots*, but ever after through all *England*. The Mother of *Herbert*, the renowned Countess of *Pembroke*, to whom Sir *Philip Sydney*, her Brother, dedicated his *Arcadia*, tore her Hair when she heard the News of her Son's Dishonour. It is certainly more probable, that King *James* should raise *Herbert* to the Title of Earl for this pacifick Behaviour, which prevented a national Quarrel, than that he should confer that Honour upon him merely for his handsome Face; more especially as he was never suspected to be a Minion of *James*.

died; that he bestowed a liberal Education on his Son, sending him to the University of *Oxford* at the Age of Eighteen, in 1602, where he closely pursued his Studies in *Alban Hall* for three or four Years.

The Accounts of *Wood* and *Langbaine* are so contradictory, that it is impossible to reconcile them. Nor can we, perhaps, decide peremptorily which of these Guides we should follow. Both were diligent Investigators of Truth, and both we should imagine to be equally capable of getting such Materials as were sufficient to authenticate their Narratives. But, after seriously balancing their Merits, I believe the Reader will be inclined to justify my preferring the Authority of *Wood* to *Langbaine*. The former lived nearer the Times of *Massinger* than the latter; he was constantly resident at *Oxford*, and had the best Opportunities to know in what Manner the Students then prosecuted their Studies. Besides, it was a Practice familiar to our ancient Nobility, to patronize and educate the Children of Gentlemen who formed their Retinue. The illustrious House of *Pembroke* I believe has ever distinguished itself by the Love and Encouragement of the fine Arts; *Shakespeare's* and *Beaumont and Fletcher's* Works, and many other Books of Poetry, dedicated to the Family of *Herbert*, give an irrefragable Proof of their generous Disposition to favour and reward the Followers of the Muses,

Wood says that *Massinger* was sent to *Oxford* in 1601; but according to *Langbaine* he was not there before 1602. This seeming Difference may be easily reconciled; for the Year then began and ended according to that Mode of Reckoning which took place before the Alteration of the Style by Act of Parliament 1752.

William Earl of *Pembroke* succeeded his Father *Henry*, who died *January* 19, 1601.—*Massinger* must then, agreeably to *Wood's* Account, have been supported at the University by the Generosity of this Nobleman. But it seems, our Author's Application to the more superficial, though alluring Studies of Poetry and Romances, frustrated the Intention of his Patron, and disqualified him from receiving a Degree; to obtain which, an Application to Logick and Philosophy was absolutely necessary; as the Candidate for that Honour must pass through an Examination in both before he can obtain it.

A Degree conferred upon a Scholar by an University is, in our Days, held a distinguished Mark of Merit; and in those Times of severe Discipline and strict Application to Learning, I suppose it was esteemed a necessary Appendage to him, who was ambitious to rise either in Church or State; and perhaps it was thought by Persons of the graver Cast, a Kind of Disgrace in a Scholar to quit his College without that Proof of Approbation. This same Earl of

Pembroke seems to have exacted that Stamp of Merit from *William Brown*, the Author of *Britannia's Pastorals*, who was educated at *Exeter College, Oxford*, much about the same Time our *Massinger* resided there. From *Wood* we learn, that *Brown* left the University before he had taken an Academical Degree, and retired to the *Inner Temple, London*: That he returned several Years after, viz. in 1624, to his College with * *Robert Dormer*, his Pupil. On the 25th of *March*, in the same Year, *Brown* received Permission to be actually created M. A. although the Degree was not conferred upon him till the *November* following: After he had left College with his Pupil he was gladly received into the Family of *William Earl of Pembroke*, who had a great Respect for him, and there he made his Fortune so well that he purchased an Estate †.

Massinger stayed at the University of *Oxford* three or four Years, and then it seems he set out for *London*, as if impatient to improve himself in the Conversation of the eminent Wits and Poets in that Metropolis: And now commenced the Æra of his Misfortunes, as well as his Fame.—I can find no Trace of the precise Time when he began to write for the Stage. The *Oxford Historian*, I have so often quoted,

* *Robert Dormer* afterwards Earl of *Carnarvon*; he married Lady *Sophia Herbert*, Sister of the Earl of *Pembroke*, and was killed at the Battle of *Naseby*, fighting for *Charles the First*.

† *Wood's Athens*, Vol. I.

says,

says, indeed, that after throwing himself out in short Effays, he ventured to try his Abilities in the writing of Plays: but what these Effays were, whether Interlude, Masque, Song, or any other Entertainment of the Stage, we are left to conjecture. The *Virgin Martyr* was, I believe, one of our Author's first Pieces which he wrote in Conjunction with *Decker*, and is far inferior to any of his other Productions. The Plot and Machinery are very extravagant; and the Play is disgraced by vulgar Dialogue and vile Obscenity, Faults which cannot fairly be laid to *Massinger's* Charge, who, though occasionally licentious, is never so offensive and disgusting.

Wood and *Langbaine* agree, that *Massinger's* Dramatick Pieces were approved; but whatever might be their Success, he soon experienced the unhappy Consequences of disobliging his Patron the Earl of *Pembroke*. This Nobleman's Character is drawn at large by the copious and eloquent Pen of Lord *Clarendon*; who styles him one of the worthiest and best beloved Men of the Age in which he lived. 'He was a Man, says the noble Historian, who conversed with Persons of the most pregnant Parts and Understanding; and to such, who needed Support or Encouragement, if fairly recommended, he was very liberal. How comes it to pass, that *Massinger*, who was born in the Family of *Herbert*, and bred at the University of *Oxford*, at the Expence of this amiable Man, should be so totally neglected, as it appears from himself that he really was?

It is most probable, that our Author's acting in Opposition to the Intention of his Patron, and leaving the University without his Permission, was the leading Cause of that low Dependence and Straitness of Circumstances which he laments so passionately in almost all his Applications to the great Men, whose Patronage he seems rather to have implored than solicited.

It must hurt a generous Mind to read the almost servile Supplications and humiliating Acknowledgements with which most of his Dedications abound. In the Epistle dedicatory of his excellent Tragedy the Duke of Milan, he *'intreats Lady Catherine Stanhope to suffer the Examples of more knowing and experienced Writers to plead his Pardon for addressing his Play to her, the rather, as his Misfortunes have left him no other Course to pursue.'* He frankly acquaints Sir Robert Wiseman* *'that he had but faintly subsisted if he had not often tasted of his Bounty.'* The like Acknowledgement of munificent Favour he makes to Sir Francis Folianby†, and Sir Thomas Bland. In short, the same Language, though somewhat varied, runs through the greatest Part of his Addresses to his Patrons. The querulous and petitionary Style is peculiar to Massinger above all other Writers.

When we read the complimentary Epistles of this Author's Cotemporaries, many of whom

* Dedication of the Great Duke of Florence.

† Dedication of the Maid of Honour.

were distinguished for Wit and Learning, and some of them Persons of superior Rank, abounding with the fullest Approbation of his Merit, and extolling the Force and Grandeur of his Genius, we are at a Loss to account for such a Man's unhappy Condition and dependent Situation.

What the Profits were which accrued to him from the Representation of his Plays, cannot now be ascertained; That the Dramatic Poets were entitled to One Third Night's Profits in the Days of *Elizabeth* and *James* the First* I believe is not generally known, but can be authenticated from a Prologue of *Decker* to one of his Plays.†

* The Progress of Liberality is slow; though after the Restoration, some Plays were acted Twenty or Thirty Nights without Interruption, and particularly *Dryden's Sir Martin Marr-All*; yet the Poets could not obtain more than the Profits of one Night, till the latter End of the last Century, when, upon the great Success of a Play of *Southern*, I believe it was *Oroonoko*, the Author obtained the Favour of two Nights: But, in Justice to the Actors, I must observe, that before the Enlarging the Number of Benefits in Favour of Authors, the Latter received the whole Money taken on their Benefit Night without any Deduction for Charges; *Downes*, in his *Roscius Anglicanus*, acquaints us, that *Shadwell* received for his Third Night of the *Squire of Alsatia*, 130l; which, says *Downes*, was the greatest Receipt they ever had at that House, (*Drury Lane*) in single Prices. A few Years after *Oroonoko* was acted, *Rowe*, by the Success of one of his Tragedies, had the Honour to increase the Poets Nights to the Number of Three; since that Time the Liberality of several Managers has frequently gone farther than the stated Rule, by giving four, and, I believe, sometimes five Nights to very successful Plays.

† If this be not a good Play the Devil's in it.

*It is not Praise is sought for now, but Pence,
Though drop'd from greasy apron'd Audience ;
Clap'd may be be with Thunder, that plucks Bays
With such foul Hands, and with squint Eyes does gaze
On Pallas' Shield, not caring though he gains
A cram'd third Night, what Filth drops from his
brains.*

But we know how precarious the Benefit Nights of Authors often are, even in this liberal Age, for by a strange Perverseness of Fortune, we see the Boxes less frequented, when an Author's Pains and Merit ought to be rewarded, than at other Times.

Towards the Beginning of the last Century the Taste for Plays became so universal, that the Number of Theatres, as Mr. Steevens assures me from the MSS. of Rymer the Historiographer, amounted to no less than twenty three.*

So many rival Theatres must have considerably diminished the Profits of them all. And though some of them, such as the *Black Friars*, the *Globe*, the *Phoenix*, the Playhouse in *Salisbury*

* Before the Act which limited the Number of Theatres in 1736, we had in London no less than six regular Theatres—The Playhouses of *Drury Lane*, *Covent Garden*, *Lincoln's Inn Fields*, the *King's Theatre*, the little Theatre in the *Haymarket*, and *Goodman's Fields*, were all open at one Time and exhibited Plays, Operas, &c. besides a Playhouse in *James Street*, called the *Slaughter House*, and another in *Filiiers Street*, *York Buildings* ; there was a Third at *Windmill Hill*, and another at *May Fair* ; and in many of the great Taverns of this Metropolis, particularly the *Devil Tavern*, *Temple Bar*, Plays were occasionally acted.

Court, and the *Cock Pit*, were more esteemed and frequented by the better Sort of People than the others ; yet from the Smallness of the Price paid for the best Seat, which was Half a Crown, we cannot suppose, that the Sum Total taken at One of these Theatres, upon an Average, amounted to more than about 25 or 30!.*

From this Estimation we may fairly conclude, that it was impossible for *Massinger* to acquire a competent Income from the Representation of his Plays. What Presents his Dedications produced we cannot easily conjecture; but from the precarious Circumstances of the Poet, it is reasonable to suppose that they were rather scanty than generous. Nor could the Printer afford a large Sum for the Copy of a Play consisting of ten Sheets, which he sold at the Price of Six Pence. This Information I learn from some Lines of *W. B.* to *Massinger*, on his *Bondman*.

'Tis granted for your Twelve Pence you did sit,
And see and hear, and *understood not yet* ; †
The

* From the Diary of *Edward Allen*, a celebrated Actor, who founded a College at *Dulwich*, in the Reign of King *James the First*, we find that the whole Amount of Money taken at the Acting of a Play at his own Theatre, called *The Fortune*, was no more than 3l. and a few Shillings; the Diary says, indeed that the Audience was very slender.

† This seems to be a much valued Compliment which was frequently paid to our old Dramatic Authors. *Beaumont* tells *B. Jonson* in some verses in praise of his *Cataline*, that he was so deep in sense he would not be understood in three Ages—An unhappy Panegyrick for a Dramatic Writer, whose worst Fault must be Obscurity.

Dr.

The Author in a Christian Pity, takes
 Care of your Good, and prints it for your Sakes,
 That such as will but venture *Six Pence more*,
 May know what they but saw and heard before.

I am inclined to believe that * *Shakespeare*,
 as a sharing Actor, gained more Money than any
 of his brother Poets did by the Profits of their
 Plays.

Though *Beaumont* and *Fletcher* were the Sons
 of Men dignified in the Church and the Law,
 and consequently superior to Indigence; yet I
 do not find that they rejected any lucrative Advan-
 tages they could acquire by their Writings.
 It was a Custom, says *Langbaine*, with *Fletcher*,
 after he had written the three first Acts of a
 Play, to shew them to the Actors, and make
 Terms with them for the whole.

Without any other Resource but his Pen,
 and surrounded as he was with many Inconve-
 niences, *Massinger* might indeed be permitted
 to complain, that his Misfortunes obliged him
 to write for the Stage.

But however mean the Gratifications which
 he obtained from his Patrons, and however small

* *Dr. Percy*, in an Appendix to the First Volume of his *Relicks of Ancient Poetry*, quotes, from *Green's Groat's Worth of Wit*, a Passage which will tend to confirm what I have conjectured of *Shakespeare's* Share as an Actor. A Player is introduced in this Pamphlet of *Green*, boasting that his Share in Stage Apparel would not be sold for Two Hundred Pounds.

the Profits were which arose from the Acting and Printing of his Plays, he was by no means wanting to himself; he was not remiss in pursuing his Interest, or slow in making known his Pretensions. He applied to such noble Lords and Ladies as were allied by Birth or Marriage to the *Pembroke* Family, and laid Claim to their Favour on Account of his Father's Connections with that noble House.

The Earl of *Montgomery* being accidentally at the Representation of the *Bondman*, and openly approving it, furnished the Author with a fair Pretence to dedicate that Play to his Lordship. The Beginning of his Address is remarkable, and we may guess from it that the Dedicator had made some fruitless Attempts to be introduced to the Earl.

However I could never arrive at the Happiness to be made known to your Lordship, a Desire born with me, to make a Tender of all Duties and Services to the noble Family of the Herberts, descended to me as an Inheritance from my dead Father, Philip Massinger: many Years he happily spent in the Service of your honourable House, and died a Servant of it.

This claim to Patronage and Protection is here plainly, though modestly, insinuated. What Favour he afterwards experienced from this Nobleman during the Life of his Brother *William* Earl of *Pembroke*, concerning whom *Massinger*,

ger always observes the most profound Silence, cannot now be known: But when, by the Death of the * latter, the Earl of *Montgomery* acquired the Title and Estate of *Pembroke*, there is reason to suppose that our Author's uneasy Circumstances were happily relieved, for in a Copy of Verses written by him on the Death of *Charles Lord Herbert*, the Earl's Son, he addressed him not only as his singular good Lord, but his *Patron*. He likewise hints in a Prologue to the Play of *The Very Woman*, that he had revived and altered that Piece in *Obedience to the Command of his Patron*:

By command

He undertook this Task, nor could it stand
With his low Fortune, to refuse to do
What by his Patron he was call'd unto :
For whose Delight and yours, we hope with Care
He hath revived it.

It is not improbable, that the Resentment of the *Herbert* Family to *Massinger*, which proceeded from the Offence given to *William Earl of Pembroke*, and was merely Personal, expired with that Nobleman.

That our Author was happy in the Acquaintance of Men distinguished by Superiority of Rank, and esteemed for their Virtues, is unquestionable. If Dramatic History † had not

* *William Earl of Pembroke*, to the great Regret of the Public, died *April 10th, 1630*.

† *Langbaine's Lives of the Poets*.

told us that he was beloved for his Modesty, Candour, Affability, and other amiable Qualities of the Mind, the Testimonies of Sir *Aston Cockaine*, Sir *Henry Moore*, Sir *Thomas Jay*, of *Ford*, *May*, *Shirley* and many Others, would have proved lasting and honourable Records of the Goodness of his Mind and the Extent of his Genius.

The Epithets of Address conferred on our Author by his Panegyrist's are remarkably affectionate, *beloved, much esteemed, dear, worthy, deserving, honour'd, long known and long loved Friend*, convey the Sentiments of *Massinger's* Admirers and Friends with an honest Warmth, worthy of him and the Congratulators.

The general Approbation given by the Public to the Plays which were produced by the united Efforts of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, tempted many other Dramatic Writers to follow their Example, and to commence joint Traders in Wit, but not with equal Fortune. These twin Stars of Dramatic Poetry were so well match'd in Abilities, so uniform in strength of Sentiment, Brilliancy of Fancy, Elegance of Diction, Variety of Character, and Oeconomy of Plot, that the most critical Reader could not pretend to determine where *Beaumont* began or where *Fletcher* ended.

But the Public might be easily convinced, that this Mode of uniting different Capacities in the joint Fabrication of a Play, was a hazardous Undertaking, which suited very few Wri-

ters, and indeed scarce any but the great Originals themselves.

The unequal Powers of Genius generally produced an heterogenous Offspring, for in no Part of Composition did the Partners assimilate or harmonize. The whole Work was at best a Piece of tawdry Patchwork, and of as many Colours as the Patriarch's Coat: The Elements of Matter in Chaos were not more dissimilar and discordant than the separate Scenes of these hand-in-hand Writers.*

*Quia Corpore in Uno
Frigida pugnabant calidis, humentia siccis,
Mollia cum duris, sine pondere habentia pondus.*

I have dwelt the longer upon this awkward and ridiculous Partnership in Wit, because our *Massinger* suffered greatly by the Practice. The mixing his fine Ore with foreign Dross, gave a Credit to his Allies which they did not merit, at the same Time that his own pure Metal was debased below its genuine Standard. In this Censure I do not mean to include *Nathaniel Field*, who assisted our Author in writing his *Fatal Doxery*; the comic Scenes of this Writer cannot easily be separated from *Massinger's*.

We

* I know of but one Comedy written since the Times of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, where the Wit, Fancy, and Humour of two Authors unite so happily, that the Texture of the Whole may be supposed to be woven by one Hand: The Reader will easily guess I mean the *Clandestine Marriage*.

We are told indeed that *Massinger* joined with *Fletcher* in the Writing of a few Plays.—Happy should we be to discover the Dramatick Pieces in which these eminent Writers exerted their mutual Talents; for they were almost equally matched, and equally capable to earn the Reward of superior Merit. But for this interesting Fact, we have no other Proof than the vague Testimony of Sir *Aston Cockaine* *, who, in a prosaick Copy of Verses, addressed to the Publishers of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, calls upon them to point out which Plays those Authors wrote jointly, and which separately, and to distinguish the Pieces which the united Muses of *Fletcher* and *Massinger* produced. But this was no more than meer Hearsay; for Sir *Aston*'s Authority was founded, according to *Langbaine*, upon something which he had heard in Conversation from one who was *Fletcher*'s intimate Friend; we cannot therefore rely on the Truth of this Story.

Sir *Aston Cockaine* was well acquainted with *Massinger*, who would, in all probability, have communicated to his Friend, a Circumstance which was so honourable to himself.

* To Mr. *Humphrey Mosley* and Mr. *Humphrey Robinson*,
In the large Book of Plays you late did print
In *Beaumont* and in *Fletcher*'s Name; why in't
Did you not Justice? Give to each his due?
For *Beaumont* of those many writ but few:
And *Massinger* in other few; the main
Being sweet Issues of sweet *Fletcher*'s Brain.
But how come I (you ask) so much to know?
Fletcher's chief bosom Friend * inform'd me so.

* Mr. *Charles Cotton*, Author of *Virgil Travestie*.

We can find no Footsteps of any Intimacy or Acquaintance between *Shakespeare* and *Massinger*; though the latter seems to have much admired the Works of the former, whom he frequently imitated, and sometimes, indeed, he has little more than transcribed him. But *Shakespeare* was older than our Poet by twenty Years, and before *Massinger* could possibly be known to the Publick, the Father of the *English* Drama enjoyed that happy Affluence, which enabled him to spend the greatest Part of his Time at his beloved *Stratford upon Avon*; from whence he returned occasionally to the Metropolis, to visit his old Friends, and to exhibit some new Work which his Leisure in the Country had tempted him to write for the Stage*.

But we cannot so easily account for *Ben Jonson's* Silence respecting our Author, who outlived *Jonson* only two Years. He, who was so ready to praise or censure all who submitted to, or questioned his Authority; has not once mentioned the Man, who after *Shakespeare*, *Beaumont*, and *Fletcher*, and himself, was the most distinguished Name in Dramatick Poetry.

But this Poet Critick, in Proportion as the Faculties of his Mind decayed, seems to have been more urgent in his Claims to superior

* That *Shakespeare* wrote for the Stage till the Year 1614, two Years before his Death, has been proved by Mr. *Malone* in a very laborious and well established Account of the several Eras when his Plays were acted.—Vide last Edit. of *Johnson's Shakespeare*, 10 Vol. 8vo.

Merit ; and the publick Voice not according with his own, it rendered him more petulant, presumptuous, and peevish. He valued himself much upon his Tragick Style, which was his worst Species of Composition. His Disappointment of Success in *Sejanus*, did not prevent him from writing his beloved *Cataline*, as I think my Lord *Dorset* some where styles it. The ill Fate of this Play seems to have hurt his Mind, and damped his Genius. For nothing which he produced afterwards, if we except some Scenes of an imperfect Piece, called the *Sad Shepherd*, is worth reading. Tradition informs us, that he wrote his *Bartholomew Fair*, to revenge the Insult offered to *Cataline*. But that Comedy does no Honour to his Memory ; nor to that Publick, who could endure such Scenes of vile Ribaldry, low Humour, and vulgar Dialogue. Such a Man, ruffled in his Temper, and disgusted with the World, would not temperately bear so successful a Rival as *Massinger*, who, in Dramatick Poetry, was equal to himself, and greatly superior to his two adopted Heirs, *Randolph* and *Cartwright*.

Jonson was, beyond all Controversy, a Man of considerable Abilities. He was an excellent Scholar, and the first Writer who taught the Use of critical Learning in Dramatic Composition. His Humour, though confined to Characters of the lowest Class, was genuine ; and in the Conduct of his Scenes, he approached nearer to the Simplicity of the Ancients than any Play Wright of his own Times ; but his

Subjects were often ill chosen ; and though his Portraits were correctly designed, his Colouring was dry and unpleasant, his Wit was fashionable, and his Satire local.

His Reputation has sunk in Proportion as *Shakespeare* has been known and admired. The unlimited Obedience to his Stage Laws, which *Jonson* exacted, not only from the People at large, but from his contemporary Authors, whether Inferiors or Equals, was, in his own Age, often disputed with Warmth, and rejected with Indignation.

Who can forbear smiling at the extravagant and absurd Commendations bestowed upon this Man by *Selden*, *Beaumont*, *Randolph*, *Chapman*, *Cartwright*, and others, his Admirers and Flatterers ?

His Son *Randolph* thus approaches his poetical Parent, with the most profound and reverential Awe :

—When my Muse upon obedient Knees
Asks not a Father's Blessing, let her leese
The Fame of her Adoption ; 'tis a Curse
I wish her, 'cause I cannot think a worse !

That his other Son, *Cartwright*, should prefer *Jonson* and *Fletcher* to *Shakespeare*, and even ridicule the Humour of the matchless Bard, can be attributed to nothing but a bad Taste, or the grossest Partiality.

That

That *Massinger* scorned to bow the Knee to this self-elected Monarch, may be proved, I think, from some Lines in his Prologue to the *Bashful Lover*.

‘ Let others, building on their Merit, say
Y’are in the wrong, if you move not that way
Which they prescribe you ; as you were
bound to learn
Their Maxims, but incapable to discern
’Twixt Truth and Falsehood.’

This is the constant Language of *Jonson*, in his Inductions, Prologues, and Epilogues. He will not permit the Audience to decide for themselves ; he assures them that his Play is good, and they ought to approve it. In the Epilogue to *Cynthia’s Revels*, he swears to the Excellence of his Workmanship.

I’ll only speak what I have heard him say,
By — ’tis good, and if you like’t you may.

When the Practice of adopting poetical Offspring first began, may be with more Readiness conjectured than ascertained. *Jonson*, who was as much delighted with an implicit Homage to his Nod of Authority, as ever beautiful Woman was charmed with the Number of her Adorers, was, I believe, the Parent of this whimsical Custom. *Ben* was not a little fond of the Delights which flow from social Pleasure, and loved the brisk Circulation of the Glass. Some peculiar Rite must have followed the Christening of the poetical Brat, who, it is likely, paid the Tribute of a sumptuous Dinner, and some Gallons of Sack, to his Revered Pa-

rent, for the much desired Blessing of Adoption. It were to be wished, that the Circumstances attending this Parnassian Ceremony, had been handed down to us, and set forth as explicitly as the celebrated *Leges Convivales*, or *Club Laws* of *Jonson*, hung up in the *Apollo*, at the *Devil Tavern*. *

In Imitation of *Ben's* Method of creating Heirs of Genius, other Poets claimed an equal Right of raising up poetical Offspring: *Chapman* adopted *Nath. Field*, and what may be thought somewhat surprizing, *Richard Brome*, the Servant and *Amanuensis* of *Jonson*, chose for his Parent, *Decker*, the avowed Antagonist of his Master. Let us hear what Father *Decker* says to his Son *Brome*, in a congratulatory Poem on his *Northern Lads*.

To my Son *Brome* on his Lads.

Which then of both shall I commend?
Or thee that art my Son and Friend,
Or her by thee begot?

Massinger was, I believe, the last of these poetical Parents; *James Shirley* was the Offspring of his Choice; and with Mr. *Dryden's* Leave, I will be bold to say, he was not un-

* In the Beginning of the Reign of *Charles* the First, or some Time after, this Society was established by *Ben Jonson*, and all the Members who composed it were called his Sons; Dr. *Morley*, afterwards Bishop of *Winchester*, and many Persons of Rank and Merit, thought themselves honoured to be adopted into the Number of these jolly Associates at the *Devil Tavern*,

worthy to be chosen Successor to a Man of the most approved Dramatical Abilities. As I have given the whole Poem, written by the Father to his adopted Heir, in its proper Place, I shall only quote here two Lines, which may serve to prove *Massinger's* Opinion of his Child's Abilities.

To his Son *James Shirley*, on his *Minerva*, &c.

Thou art my Son, in that my Choice is spoke;
Thine, with thy Father's Muse, strikes equal
Stroke.

Here we see the modest Man, on this Occasion, throwing off his usual Reserve, and assuming a Dignity conformable to his Merit.

Amongst the Friends of *Massinger*, I must not forget to name *Joseph Taylor*, a very eminent Comedian; who, in a Copy of Verses, complimented him on the great Success of his *Roman Actor*, a Play in which *Taylor* represented the principal Character. In his Address, he styles the Poet his long known and loved Friend, *Philip Massinger*.

Goff, in some Latin Verses, which he wrote upon the same Play, celebrates the Merit of the Author and the Player.

Ecce *Philippinæ*, celebrata Tragædia, Musæ,
Quam *Roseus Britonum Roscius* egit, adest,
Semper fronde ambo vireant Parnasside, &c.

Taylor

Taylor represented the Part of *Hamlet*, originally; from the Remembrance of whose Action in that Character, Sir *William Davenant* is said to have taught *Betterton* to perform Wonders.

Taylor's Name is to be found in the List of Actors in *Shakespeare's* and *Beaumont and Fletcher's* Plays. After having lived above forty Years the Admiration of the Publick, in a Variety of principal Characters, he was unhappily reduced to a State of Indigence. It was his Misfortune to survive the prosperous Days of the Theatre, which the breaking out of the civil Wars in 1640, caused to be shut up till the Restoration of *Charles II.* a Period of twenty Years. This excellent Actor died very poor, at *Richmond*, in *Surry*, about the Year 1655.

Massinger did not live to feel the Miseries of that civil Contest, which destroyed the Government of this Kingdom, in Church and State; he was happy in not seeing the Times of Confusion and Tumult, which though they affect all Ranks of Society, are most unfriendly to the Muses. Had he survived, he might, perhaps, have shared the Fate of *Taylor*; or have been reduced, like his Son *Shirley*, to earn his Livelihood by teaching Grammar*.

Massinger died in *March* 1640, according to our present Mode of reckoning, or 1639 agreea-

* *Shirley* died during the Rage of the great Fire of *London*, in 1666.—The Terror and Fright which he and his Wife suffered from this dreadful Conflagration, precipitated the Death of both.

bley to that Style which then prevailed. *Wood* and *Langbaine* both agree in the Manner of his Death ; he went to bed in good Health, and was found dead in the Morning, in his own House, on the *Bankside, Southwark*. The Comedians paid a just Tribute to their deceased Friend by attending him to his Grave. He was buried about the Middle of the Church-yard, belonging to *St. Saviour's Church*, commonly called the *Bull-head Church-yard*.

Sir *Aston Cockaine*, in an Epitaph which I here transcribe from his Poems, published in 1659, acquaints us, that *Massinger* was buried in the same Grave with *Fletcher*.

An Epitaph on Mr. *John Fletcher*, and Mr. *Philip Massinger*, who lay both buried in one Grave, in *St. Mary Overy's Church*, in *Southwark* *.

In the same Grave was *Fletcher* buried, here
Lies the Stage Poet, *Philip Massinger* ;
Plays they did write together, were great
Friends,
And now one Grave includes them in their ends.
So whom on Earth nothing could part, beneath
Here in their Fame they lie, in spite of Death.

After what has been said of our Author, by the Editor, in his elegant Preface, and by the judicious Writer of the Essay on our *English*

* The Register of that Church, according to *Oldys*, in his MS. Notes on *Langbaine's* Life, of *Massinger*, records that he was buried in one of the four Church Yards belonging to the *Bullhead*.

Dramatick Poets, it may be thought superfluous, as well as impertinent in me, to add any Thing farther upon the Subject.

Notwithstanding, I hope I shall be pardoned if I endeavour to point out some Peculiarities which distinguish this Writer from his Contemporaries.

The Plots of *Massinger*, like those of all our old Dramatists, are borrowed from surprizing Tales, and strange Adventures, from wild Romances and entertaining Novels, or from old Chronicles and well known History. In the conducting of his Fable, he is consistently and invariably attentive.

It is not his Custom, in Imitation of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, to write two or three Acts of a Play with uncommon Energy, and after exciting Expectation, and promising Delight, to disappoint the Reader, by unpardonable Neglect, or an utter Desertion of the Fable. I will not pretend to say, that these valuable Authors are always and equally deficient in working up the Catastrophes of their Plays; but I will appeal to their most partial Readers, if they are not often shamefully forgetful and indolent, where the Union of Genius and Judgment is most required*.

* I have either read or been informed that it was generally Mr. *Fletcher's* Practice, after he had finished three Acts of a Play, to shew them to the Actors; and after they had agreed upon Terms, he huddled up the two last without that proper Care which was requisite.

Langbaine's Poets, p. 144.

In

In *Massinger*, Nature and Art are so happily connected, that the one never seems to counteract the other, and in whatever Rank he may be placed by the Criticks, yet this Praise cannot be refused him, that his Genius operates equally in every Part of his Composition ; for the Powers of his Mind are impartially diffused through his whole Performance ; no Part is purposely degraded to Insipidity, to make another more splendid and magnificent ; one Act of a Play is not impoverished to enrich another. All the Members of the Piece are cultivated and disposed as Plot, Situation, and Character require.

The Editor very justly observes, that *Massinger* excels *Shakespeare* himself in an easy constant flow of harmonious Language ; nor should it be forgotten, that the Current of his Style is never interrupted by harsh, and obscure Phraseology, or overloaded with figurative Expression. Nor does he indulge in the wanton and licentious Use of mixed Modes in Speech ; he is never at a Loss for proper Words to cloath his Ideas. And it must be said of him with Truth, that if he does not always rise to *Shakespeare's* Vigour of Sentiment, or Ardor of Expression, neither does he sink like him into mean Quibble, and low Conceit.

There is a Discrimination in the Characters of *Massinger*, by which they are varied as distinctly as those of *Shakespeare*. The Hero, the Statesman, the Villain, the Fop, the Coward, the Man of Humour, and the Gentleman, speak
a Lan-

a Language appropriated to their several Personages.

Sometimes he takes Pleasure in smoothing the Features of a Villain, and concealing his real Character, till his Wickedness breaks out into Action; nor is this Peculiarity in our Author effected by any constrained or abrupt Conduct, but strictly conformable to Dramatick Truth, and the Oeconomy of his Fable. *Francisco*, in the *Duke of Milan*, assumes, during the first Act, such a Face of Honesty and Fidelity, that the Reader must be surprized, though not shocked at the Change of his Behaviour in the second Act. The Villains of *Massinger* are not Monsters of Vice, who sin merely from the Delight they feel in the Practice of Wickedness. *Francisco*, like Dr. *Young's Zanga*, *, carries his Resentment beyond the Limits of his Provocation; but a Sister dishonoured, is, by an *Italian*, supposed to be a sufficient Cause for pursuing the deepest Revenge. So *Montreville*, in the unnatural Combat, smothers his Rage for the Injuries he had received from *Malefort*, with whom he lives in great Familiarity, and the highest seeming Warmth of Friendship, till he gains an Opportunity, towards the Close of the Play, to glut his Appetite of Revenge, by ravishing *Malefort's* Daughter, and upbraiding him at the same Time with the Wrongs which he had suffered from him.

* In the Tragedy of the *Revenge*, *Francisco* has some Features not unlike those of the *Moor*. And I cannot help thinking, that *Young* had read the *Duke of Milan*, and borrowed a few Hints from that Tragedy.

Massinger is equally skilful in producing Comick and Tragick Delight; his Characters in both Styles are stamped by the Hand of Nature. *Eubulus*, in the *Piçture*, is as true a Portrait of honest Freedom, shrewd Observation, and singular Humour, as *Shakespeare's* *Ænobarbus*, in *Antony and Cleopatra*. *Durazzo*, in the *Guardian*, is inferior to no Character of agreeable Singularity in any Author. Joyous in Situations of the utmost Peril, he is an impartial Lover of Valour, in Friend or Foe; he pardons the Follies of Youth, by a generous Recollection of his own. *Durazzo* forgives every Thing but Cowardice of Spirit and Meaneis of Behaviour; a more animated and picturesque Description of Field Sports than that given by *Durazzo* is not to be found in any Author. *Massinger* does not use the Agency of Fools, who in *Shakespeare's* Management produce such admirable Scenes of Delight; *Graculo* and *Hilario* in the *Duke of Milan* and the *Piçture* seem to partake something of the *Spanish Gracioso* and the *English Clown*; and are employed by our Author as Chorusses to conduct his Plots.

That *Massinger* was no mean Scholar every Reader of Taste will discern; his Knowledge in Mythology, and History antient and modern, appears to have been extensive; nor was he a mere Smatterer in Logic, and Philosophy, though *Wood* informs us that he did not apply himself to the Study of these Sciences when he was at the University. That he was very conversant with the *Greek* and *Roman Classics*, his frequent

frequent Allusions to poetical Fable, and his interweaving some of the choicest Sentiments of the best antient Writers in his Plays, sufficiently demonstrate. What he borrowed from the Classics he paid back with Interest, for he dignified their Sentiments by giving them a new Lustre; while *Jonson*, the superstitious Idolater of the Antients, deforms his Style by affected Phraseology and verbal Translation; his Knowledge was unaccompanied by true Judgment and Elegance of Taste, and in the Incorporation of foreign Sentiments with his own, he understood not the Means to enrich his Composition by artfully borrowing from the dead Languages.

It was a Fault common to our old Dramatic Writers, in describing the Manners of different Nations, to forget what Painters call the Costume; if they laid their Plots in *France*, *Spain*, *Italy*, *Germany*, or *Turkey*, the Characters were merely *English*, and the Customs, Fashions, Follies, and Vices of our great Metropolis were sure to be introduced, though the Poet had laid his Scene in *Rome* or *Constantinople*.

This Incongruity in national Manners runs through *Shakespeare*, *B. Jonson*, and *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, as well as *Massinger*. But though, in the Conduct of the Drama, this was a great Impropriety, the Public, I believe, suffered no Injury from it. The reigning Enormities and fashionable Follies of the Times, were censured, perhaps, with greater Freedom, when the Scene

was

was laid at *Venice*, than if it had been placed in *London*.

Although the Dramatic Poet is the most pleasing, he is at the same Time the most pungent Moralist, and a more powerful Reformer of Vice and Folly than the profest Satirist himself. What are the solemn Sermons of *Seneca*, the laughing Reproofs of *Horace* and the grave Declamations of *Juvenal*, when compared with the deep Reflections of the melancholy *Cardenes*,* and the poignant Strictures of a mad *Timon* or a distracted *Lear*? *Seneca* dazzles the Reason, *Horace* amuses the Fancy, *Juvenal* alarms the Passions, but *Shakespeare* and *Massinger* warm and refine the Heart.

Massinger, though inferior in pointed Satire to *Shakespeare*, seizes every Opportunity to crush rising Folly, and repel incroaching Vice.

When this Author lived, Luxury in Eating and Finery in Dress universally prevailed, to the most enormous Excess.—These Perversions of natural Appetite and decent Custom he combated with an uncommon Ardor of Resentment, and applied to them the Force of Ridicule wherever he fairly met them. In his *City Madam* he attacks the Pride, Extravagance, and Affectation of the Citizens and their Wives; he fixes the Boundaries between the gay Splendors of a Court, and the sober Customs of the City. The Ci-

* A Character in the Play of the *Very Woman*.

tizens, by an awkward Imitation of Court Gaieties have always rendered themselves Ridiculous. But this is not all—In abandoning their own primitive Way of Living, they have lost that Influence which can only be preserved by Industry, Wealth, Oeconomy, Simplicity, and Plainness of Manners.

Massinger does not, like *Shakespeare* and *Jonson*, sport with Cowardice and Effeminacy; he considers them not only as Defects of Character but as Stains of Immorality: *Romont's* Reproof to *Noval*, a Coward and a Fop, is singular and bitter.

As if thou e'er wert angry
 But with thy Taylor, and yet that poor Shred
 Can bring more to the making up of a Man
 Then can be hoped from thee—Thou art his
 Creature,
 And did he not each Morn create thee,
 'Thou'dst stink and be forgotten.—I'll not
 change
 One Syllable more with thee, until thou bring
 Some Testimony under good Men's Hands
 Thou art a *Christian*. I suspect thee strongly,
 And will be satisfied.

Fatal Dowry, Act II.

But, besides the occasional Censure which *Massinger* passed upon the growing Vices of the Times in which he lived he aimed at higher Game. He boldly attacked the Faults of Ministers and of Kings themselves. He
 pointed

pointed his Arrows against *Carr* and *Buckingham*, against *James* and *Charles* the First.

The pusillanimous Temper of *James* exposed him to the Scorn of all Europe, and rendered him contemptible in the Eyes of his own Subjects. The warlike Spirit of the Nation was subdued by the Cowardice of the Prince. He was called upon by the Voice of his People, and by his Parliament, to assist his Son-in-Law, *Frederick*, the *Elektor Palatine*, and King of *Bohemia*, against the Emperor *Ferdinand*, who deprived him at last of the best Part of his Dominions. *James*, instead of furnishing Troops to *Frederick*, contented himself with sending Ambassadors to the *Austrian* Court, the Futility of which Conduct was ridiculed upon the Stage at *Brussels*.

Massinger, though from the general Tenor of his Writings, he appears to have been a firm Friend of Monarchy, and warmly attached to Government in Church and State, was not a Favourer of Arbitrary Power, or inclined to put an implicit Faith in the Word of Kings; he was averse from embracing the Doctrines of Passive Obedience and Non-Resistance *, so much

* The Conduct of *B.* and *Fletcher* so far as it respects the Duty which Subjects owe to Kings, deserves Notice : They preach up the most unreserved Submission to Princes, and zealously maintain

The Right Divine of Kings to govern Wrong.

Yet they make no Scruple of plotting against, and destroying tyrannical Princes.

Vide The Maid's Tragedy.

inculcated by *James*, in his Speeches to Parliament, and his Court Divines in their Sermons. *Massinger* was a good Subject, but not like other Poets, his Contemporaries, a slavish Flatterer of Power, and an Abettor of despotick Principles.

Our Poet, in his Play of the *Maid of Honour*, under the Characters of *Roberto*, King of *Sicily*, and *Fulgentio* his Favourite, undoubtedly drew the Portraits of *James* and his Minion, *Carr* or *Buckingham*, or perhaps both.

The Duke of *Urbino*, by his Ambassador, craves the Assistance of the King of *Sicily*.—*Roberto* pleads in his Refusal, the Injustice of the Duke's Cause.—*James* too, would not own the Title of his Son-in-Law to *Bohemia*, though he was chosen by the free Votes of the Estates of that Kingdom; nor would he permit him to receive the Honours due to his high Rank, from pretended Scruples of Conscience or Motives of Honour. *Bertoldo*, from many spirited Arguments, urges the King to grant the Duke the requested Aid. The following Speech will, I believe, confirm my Conjecture of the *Sicilian* Prince's Resemblance to our *British* Monarch.

——May you live long

* *The King of Peace*; so you deny not us
The Glory of the War; let not our Nerves

* *Rex Pacificus* was a Title that *James* affected, and was highly pleased with.

Shrink

Shrink up with Sloth, nor for Want of Employment

Make younger Brothers Thieves : 'Tis their Sword, Sir,

Must sow and reap their Harvest. If Examples May move you more than Arguments, *look on England,*

The Empress of the European Isles,

Unto whom alone ours yields Precedence :

When did she flourish so as when she was

The Mistress of the Ocean ? Her Navies

Putting a Girdle round about the World.

When the Iberian quak'd, her Worthies nam'd ;

And the fair Fleur de Lis grew pale set by

The Red Rose and the White ? Let not our Armour

Hung up, or our unrigg'd Armada make us

Ridiculous to the late poor Snakes, our Neighbours,

Warm'd in our Bosoms ; and to whom again

We may be terrible ; while we spend our Hours

Without Variety, confin'd to Drink,

Dice, Cards, or Whores.

When this animated Speech was first delivered by the Actor, I cannot doubt but that it was heard by the Audience with Rapture, and universally applauded. The Poet spoke the genuine Sense of the Nation. James, unhappily for himself and his Posterity, instead of giving free Liberty to the generous Spirit of his Subjects, and indulging the favourite Passion of the Nation in the brisk Prosecution of a foreign War, by which he might have gained their Love and secured their Allegiance, cherished the Cockle of Discontent and Sedition, which broke out

with Violence in the Reign of his Successor, and caused the Ruin of the King and Kingdom.

Of *Fulgentio*, King *Roberto's* Favourite, *Bertoldo* speaks with the utmost Contempt:

——Let him keep his Smiles
For his State Catamite.

Though *James* was supposed to be averse from the Fair Sex, and was unsuspected of any Intrigue with Women, yet he was extremely solicitous to gratify the amorous Passions of his two great Favourites, *Somerset* and *Buckingham*. To forward the former's Marriage with the Countess of *Essex*, he undertook to prove the Necessity of a Divorce between her and the Earl her Husband, *propter frigiditatem*. Many learned Arguments did he make, and several obscene Expressions did he use, in the Prosecution of this unkingly Business. But if we may credit Sir *Edward Peyton*, *James* carried his Complaisance to his Minion *Buckingham* still farther, even to a shameful Degree of Pandarism.

“ The King entertained Sir *John Crofts* and his Daughter, a beautiful Lass, at *Newmarket*, that *Buckingham* might have the easier Means to vitiate her. And one Mrs. *Dorothy Gawdry* being a rare Creature, the King carried *Buckingham* to *Culford*, that he might have his Will of her : But Sir *Nicholas Bacon's* Sons and *Peyton* himself, contrived to secure the Lady from the King and *Buckingham's* base Intentions *.”

* *Peyton's* divine Catastrophe of the *Stuarts*.

In the same Play of the *Maid of Honour*, King *Roberto*, willing to second the Passions of his favourite *Fulgentio*, employs his Influence to forward his Match with *Camiola*. For that Purpose, he sends her a Ring by the Minion himself; but the Lady treats *Fulgentio* with that proper Contempt which his Character deserves :

Camiola. Excuse me, Sir, if I
Deliver Reasons, why upon no Terms
I'll marry you.

Fulgentio. Come, your wise Reasons.

Cam. Such as they are, pray you take them:
First, I am doubtful whether you are a Man;
Since for a Shape, trim'd up in Lady's Dressing,
*You might pass for a Woman**. Now I love
To deal on Certainties; and for the Fairness
Of your Complection, which you think will take me,
The Colour I must tell you in a Man,
Is weak and faint.

—Then as you are a Courtier,
A graced one too, *I fear you have been too for-*
ward.

And so much for your Person. Rich you are,
Dev'lish rich, as 'tis reported, and surely have
The Aids of Satan's little Fiends to get it :
And what is got upon his Back, must be
Spent, you know where.

* I have seen *Somerſet* and *Buckingham* labour to resemble Ladies in the Effeminacy of their Dressings; though in whorish Looks and wanton Gestures, they exceeded any Part of Womankind, my Conversation did cope withall.

Osborne's Memoirs of James I.

But *Massinger* did not confine his Censure to personal Defects or Vices in the Prince and his Ministers. He extended his Satire to an open Attack upon Mal-administration, and the Abuses of Government.

The Admirers of the two first *Stuarts*, *Charles* and *James*, will confess, that though they affected to despise, yet they greatly dreaded, and cordially hated Parliaments; Assemblies that were obnoxious to them, because they endeavoured to fix proper Bounds to their Power, and inquired rigorously into national Grievances. During their Reigns, Patents, Monopolies, Loans, and Benevolences, were the Abuses universally exclaimed against. All these raged in full Force, when the Dread of a House of Commons was withdrawn.

In the *Emperor of the East*, a Play acted by the Command of *Charles I.* *Massinger* vindicates the Cause of the Nation against unjust and exorbitant Impositions, and the Excesses of regal and ministerial Authority. A Scene between the Projectors and *Pulcheria*, the Guardian of the Kingdom, in whose Character I think he intended a Compliment to the Memory of *Queen Elizabeth*, gave the Author an Opportunity to speak the public Sense upon the Stage :

Pulcheria. Projector, I treat first
Of you and your Disciples; you roar out,
All is the King's; his Will's above his Laws,
And that fit Tributes are too gentle Yokes

For

For his poor Subjects ; whispering in his Ear,
If they would have his Fear, no Man should
dare

To bring a Sallad from his Country Garden
Without the paying Gabel ; kill a Hen
Without Excise ; or if he desire
To have his Children or his Servants wear
Their Heads upon their Shoulders, you affirm
In Policy, 'tis fit the Owner should
*Pay for them by the Poll ; or if the Prince
Want a certain Sum, he may command a City
Impossibilities ; and for Nonperformance,
Compel it to submit to any Fine*
His Officers shall impose, &c.

The Reader of public Transactions, during the whole Reign of *James*, and the greatest Part of *Charles I.* will acknowledge the Justice of *Massinger's* Censure. I shall only observe, that the City of *London* was frequently the Object of courtly Imposition and arbitrary Taxation.—From the Authority of *Camden*, in his *Annals of James I.* we learn, that that Monarch, in the Year 1620, demanded of the City of *London* Twenty Thousand Pounds. As there was no legal Pretence for the Tax, the Citizens did not entirely comply with the royal Mandate ; but willingly, as the same Author assures us, gave the King Ten Thousand Pounds. But enough on this Subject.

In a peculiar Strain of Eloquence, and most pathetick Art of Persuasion, *Massinger* equals, if not excells, all Dramatick Writers, ancient
and

and modern; whether he undertakes the Defence of injured Virtue, avenges the Wrongs of suffering Beauty, or pleads the Cause of insulted Merit; would he sooth, by gentle Insinuation, or prevail by Strength of Argument, and the Irradiations of Truth!—Does he arraign, supplicate, reproach, threaten or condemn!—He is equally powerful, victorious and triumphant. What are all the laboured Defences of the Stage, when compared to *Paris's* eloquent Vindication of scenical Exhibition before the *Roman* Senate, in the Tragedy of the *Roman Actor*? Would the Reader feel the Effects of filial Piety, in its most amiable and enthusiastick Excess, let him read *Charolois* pleading in Behalf of his dead Father, and claiming a Right to his Body, by giving up his own in Exchange, in the *Fatal Dowry*. The same *Charolois*, justifying himself from the Charge of Cruelty, in putting to Death an adulterous Wife, exhibits a still stronger Proof of that inimitable Art, which our Author so perfectly enjoyed, to move the Passions, by an irresistible Stream of eloquent and pathetick Language.

Massinger is the avowed Champion of the Fair Sex. He lived at a Time when the Spirit of Chivalry, which owed its Institution to the Honours due to the beautiful Part of the Creation, was not quite extinguished. And however the Excesses of Knight Errantry may be ridiculed, there is something noble in the Idea of protecting Beauty in Distress, and rescuing female Innocence from Oppression. Our Author always rises above himself, when he describes Beauty
and

and its Effects. When a fine Woman is the Subject, his Verses run with a sweet Fervour, and pleasing Rapidity; like *Milton*, when ruminating on the divine Verses of *Homer* and other sublime Poets, *Massinger's* Ideas when feeding on his favourite Subject.—

Voluntary move

Harmonious Numbers.

The Females of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher* are for the most Part violent in their Passions, capricious in their Manners, licentious, and even indecent in their Language.

Massinger's Fair Ones are cast in a very different Mold; they partake just so much of the male Virtues, Constancy and Courage, as to render their feminine Qualities more amiable and attractive.

Four of our Author's Plays are professedly written in Honour of the Fair Sex. The *Bondman*, the *Bashful Lover*, the *Picture*, and the *Maid of Honour*, are so many beautiful Wreaths, composed of the choicest poetical Flowers, and offered on the Shrine of Beauty.

I have been tempted by my Veneration for this admirable Writer, to go greater Lengths than I intended, in the Investigation of his peculiar Excellencies. *Massinger*, the more he is read will certainly be more esteemed and approved, for no Author will better bear the strictest Examination; the enjoying the Beauties of this Writer will be attended, perhaps, with some little Mur-

Murmuring and Self-upbraiding ; Surprise will be accompanied with Indignation, and Delight with Regret ; most Readers will lament the having had such a noble Treasure within their Reach, without having once looked upon its Lustre ; and in Proportion as their Negligence has been, will be the Profusion of their Praise and Admiration !

Though it must be granted, that *Massinger*, in Compliance with the Times in which he lived, and in Conformity to the Practice of contemporary Writers, did occasionally produce low Characters, and write Scenes of licentious and reprehensible Dialogue ; yet we must remember to his Honour, that he never sports with Religion by prophane Rants or idle Jestings ; nor does he once insult the Clergy, by petulant Witticism or Common-place Abuse.



T O

Dr. SAMUEL JOHNSON,

THIS LIFE of MASSINGER,

Is most respectfully inscribed,

As a small but sincere Tribute

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His great and uncommon Genius;

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By his much obliged

And most obedient Servant,

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